THRIVING CHURCHES IN ASSAM

Global Interaction's partnership with Assam continues through scholarships for church leaders, visits for teaching and pastoral encouragement and ministry program subsides. WA team member and former cross-cultral worker Pam Gallagher recently visited Assam.

1946 - Australian Baptist Foreign Mission (ABFM, then ABMS now Global Interaction) feels a strong sense of call to the Boro people following many points of connection over a number of years. Assam American Baptist Mission ask ABFM to take over their work in the area and Boro people also ask for assistance.

1947 - Wilf and Gwen Crofts relocate from East Bengal and are the first Australian Baptists to live and serve among the Boro people in Assam. They travel between 16 Boro churches.

1948 - Garo churches make contact with the Crofts for assistance. There are 12 isolated churches without any support.

1951 - Some Australian Baptist cross-cultural workers relocate to the Garo area.

1954 - Visits begin to Rabha communities to share the Gospel and offer medical help.

1957 – At the Rabha community's request, Australian cross-cultural workers arrive to live among them.

1959 - First church forms in the Rabha community with 10 baptised.

1968 - Political unrest threatens visas for cross-cultural workers so planning begins for how to continue partnerships with Assam churches.

1970 - All Australian Baptist residential cross-cultural workers leave Boro, Garo and Rabha communities in Assam due to Indian government restrictions.

Global Interaction continues to partner with churches in Assam through schools and education of church leaders and pastors visits. Importantly, the Boro, Garo and Rabha communities accept responsibility for their own churches and they grow.

Today – there are more than 30,000 members across approximately 250 churches among Boro, Garo and Rabha communities.

Pam Gallagher vividly remembers hearing stories from her childhood about Assam. She recalls being told of the many people who had never heard about Jesus in a meaningful way. She remembers giving to the ministry and praying that there would be a strong movement of God among these people. At the beginning of this year, she had the opportunity to visit Assam for the first time and meet members of the vibrant Boro, Garo and Rabha churches. For Pam, it was an incredible joy and privilege to witness the thriving churches!

Pam was thrilled to see the answer to her childhood prayers and the prayers of many others through the Bora, Garo and Rabha church communities. She heard about churches supporting evangelists to share the Good News with their own communities and Hindu background people coming to faith. Pam spoke to many people who came from a Hindu background, including one man who is now the area pastor of eight churches. These communities are generous, with families encouraged to set a serving of rice aside at each meal to be brought to the church and sold as a means of supporting the evangelists.

Global Interaction cross-cultural workers only lived in Assam for 23 years before Indian government restrictions closed off the area to Christian workers. Wilf and Gwen Crofts always had the conviction that the responsibility of church leadership should be with the local people and the cross-cultural workers' responsibility was in the training and equipping of these leaders to reach their own people. This attitude helped to set the churches up for the years ahead where there would be limited outside support and no residential cross-cultural workers.

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Pam returned home overwhelmed with what she had experienced and with the prayer that this would be a glimpse into what we will see among the nine least-reached people groups that are the focus of our work today. She continues to pray that one day there will be strong and vibrant faith communities emerge among each of these people groups as well.

- Right: photo taken by Pam